



PLATALEA REGIA: Gould

Hillbrandt del.

PLATALEA REGIA, *Gould.*

Royal Spoonbill.

Platalea regia, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 106 ; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part IV.

THIS fine species of Spoonbill may be readily distinguished from the *Platalea leucorodia* of Europe by the nudity of its face, which even considerably beyond the eyes is entirely destitute of feathers, and is of the same black colour as the bill ; in other respects—size and colouring of the plumage—little difference exists between the two species. The fine crest which adorns the principal figure in the accompanying Plate is, doubtless, only assumed during the pairing and breeding season, as I have seen adult specimens both with and without these feathers, and this is precisely the case with the European bird.

The Royal Spoonbill is tolerably common on the eastern and northern coast of Australia, and I have been informed that, although a rare visitant there, it has been killed within the colony of New South Wales. All my specimens were procured at Moreton Bay, and I have seen others from Port Essington. In its habits and disposition it as closely assimilates to the Spoonbill of Europe as in the general appearance ; taking up its abode on the margin of those marshy inlets of the sea that run for a considerable distance into the interior, as well as those of rivers and lakes, feeding upon small-shelled mollusks, frogs, insects and the fry of fish, which are readily taken by its beautifully organized bill.

But little difference exists in the outward appearance of the sexes, both having the ornamental crest, which at the will of the bird is spread out on all sides, and droops gracefully over the back of the neck.

The whole of the plumage is white ; bill, face, legs and feet black ; on the crown of the head and over each eye a triangular mark of orange ; eye red.

The figures are those of a male and a female, rather more than half the natural size.